

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00442 141728Z

43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 SAB-01 SSM-03 A-01

OPR-02 SY-05 ACDA-05 ACDE-00 /092 W

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O R 141427Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8128

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 00442 141728Z

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 442

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: BATTLES STILL ON; PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY FOR FRANGIE-ASAD MEETING

REF BEIRUT 392 (1410Z)

1. SUMMARY: THE BATTLE OF BEIRUT AND SUBURBS CONTINUES. TRIPOLI AND ZAHLE AREAS ALSO REPORTED TO BE HOT. MARONITE MEETING JAN 13 RESULTED IN HARD POSITION ON ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN PRESENCE BUT A HINT OF FLEXIBILITY OF INTERNAL POLITICAL REFORMS. PRES FRANGIE IS CONTINUING CONSULTATIONS AMONG CHRISTIAN LEADERS PRIOR TO MEETING WITH SYRIAN PRES ASAD. THIS MEETING IS STILL PROJECTED FOR JAN 17. END SUMMARY

2. EXCEPT FOR BRIEF BREATHING SPELL FOR THE BATTLE OF BEIRUT

AND SUBURBS HAS CONTINUED. FIGHTING IN AND AROUND TEL ZAATAR, THE NORTHERN BRIDGES OVER BEIRUT RIVER, AND THE HOTEL DISTRICT FIGURES MOST PROMINENTLY. TEL ZAATAR AND JISR EL PACHA APPEAR TO BE HOLDING OUT WITH LITTLE SIGN THAT PHALANGISTS HAVE MADE MUCH PROGRESS IN THEIR AREAS. ONE

REPORT STATES THAT JISR EL PACHA HAS BEEN EVACUATED. THIS IS NOT CONFIRMED BUT PHALANGISTS MAY HAVE TIGHTENED THEIR HOLD ON THE CAMP. NUMEROUS ATTEMPTS BY PALESTINIANS AND THEIR ALLIES TO FORCE THEIR WAY FROM CHIAH PAST HAZMIEH HAVE FAILED SO FAR, BUT HAVE SERVED TO KEEP THE POT BOILING FROM FURN EL CHEBBAK THROUGH HADATH-LEIGLCPAM PHALANGISTS PERSIST IN THEIR EFFORTS TO BRING THE WAR HOME TO TARIK JADIDE AND MAZRAA BY SHELLING, WHICH HAS RESULTED IN A GROWING NUMBER OF CASUALTIES.

3. THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTRML OF THE NORTHERN BRIDGES HAS NOT YET DRAWN TO A CLOSE. PHALANGISTS REPORTEDLY CONTROL ACCESS TO SOUTHERN OF THE TWO BRIDGES, BUT CANNOT USE IF EFFECTIVELY AS SUPPLY ROUTE BECAUSE IT REMAINS UNDER FIRE FROM
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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 00442 141728Z

QUARANTINA.

4. THE HOTEL DISTRICT SAW A NIGHT OF HEAVY SHOOTING, WITH NO CHANGE IN PREVIOUSLY DRAWN LINES. EACH HOTEL AND OFFICE BLOCK A FORTRESS UNTO ITSELF, THERE IS LITTLE EITHER SIDE CAN DO TO DISLODGE THE OTHER. THIS MORNING THERE HAVE BEEN HEAVY EXPLOSIONS AND AUTOMITIC WEAPONS FIRE AT A FAIRLY CONSTANT LEVEL.

5. NORTH OF BEIRUT, WHATEVER IS HAPPENING UN DBAYE REMAINS SOMETHING OF A MYSTERY. ONCE AGAIN PHALANGISTS THROUGH "AL AMAL" SPEAK OF A VICTORY THERE, WHILE ANOTHER SOURCE SAYS THAT PHALANGISTS BRIEFLY ENTERED THE CAMP, LEFT, AND RESUMED THE SIEGE. PALESTINIANS AND LEFTISTS HOTLY DENY THAT THE CAMP HAS SURRENDERED AND SAY THAT THEY HAVE ADVANCED THEMSELVES.

6. SOUTH OF BEIRUT, IN JIYE AND DAMOUR, CONFUSION ALSO REIGNS, BUT WITH ROLES REVERSED. THERE, LEFTISTS CLAIM TO HAVE TAKEN BOTH TOWNS AND THE CAIMCAM OF THE REGION PUBLISHED A CEASEFIRE COMMUNIQUE LAST NIGHT SUPPOSEDLY AGREED UPON BY BOTH FACTIONS. NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, PHALANGISTS SAY THE FIGHTING GOES ON.

7. AS FEARED, ZAHLE HAS BEEN SCENE OF HEAVY FIGHTING, WITH THE ARMY APPARENTLY HELPING OUT ZAHLIATES AGAINST THE ATTACKERS FROM THE BEKAA AND SURROUNDING MOSLEM VILLAGES. THINGS ARE NOT MUCH BETTER IN TRIPOLI-ZGHORTA EITHER, WITH PPS IN KOURA SOUTH OF TRIPOLI REPORTED TO HAVE JOINED THE TRIIGLITANIANS IN AN ATTEMPT TO CUT OFF ZGHORTA.

8. FRANGIE'S MEETING WITH MARONITE LEADERS AT BAABDA JAN 13 (SEE REFTTEL) RESULTED IN SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT TO NEGOTIATE AS HE SEES FIT WITH SYRIANS. HOWEVER, COMMUNIQUE AT END OF MEETING TOOK FAMILIAR MARONITE POSITION THAT CAUSE OF TROUBLE IN LEBANON IS PALESTINIAN INTERFERENCE. WE UNDERSTAND MEETING STUDIED VARIOUS DEMANDS OF LEBANESE MOSLEMS AND LEFTISTS AND CONCLUDED THEY WERE NOT MAIN SOURCE OF COUNTRY'S STRIFE. THIS SUGGESTS FRANGIE MAY START NEGOTIATIONS FROM HARD POSITION ON PALESTINIAN ISSUE, AND REPORTEDLY HE INTENDS TO REMIND SYRIANS THAT

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PAGE 04 BEIRUT 00442 141728Z

THEIR OWN TREATMENT OF PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN SYRIA IS AUTHORITARIAN. HOWEVER, MEETING'S DOWNPLAYING OF INTERNAL DEMANDS OF MOSLEM/LEFTIST SIDE CAN BE TAKEN AS HINT OF FLEXIBILITY AT LEAST ON THESE KEY ISSUES. PROMINENT MEMBER OF PARGIAMENT WHO WAS INVOLVED WITH RECENT PARLIAME SRY "INITIATIVE COMMITTEE" TOLD EMBOFF JAN 14 THAT FRANGIE HHS ACCEPTED POLITICAL COMPROMISE WITH MOSLEMS AS NECESSARY CONCEPT AND HE IS OPTIMISTIC THAT FRANGIE-ASAD MEETING WILL BEAR FRUIT. ACCORDING THIS SOURCE, CHAMOUN IS ALSO RECONCILED TO COMPROMISES EMBODIED IN SYRIAN FIVE POINTS. FATHER KASSIS IS FAR LESS FLEXIBLE, BUT NOT POWERFUL ENOUGH TO BLOCK RESULT. MAIN PROBELM, THIS DEPUTY BELIEVES, ISHGOUCHING ULTIMATE COMPROMISE IN WAY THAT PHALANGE, AS MAJOR POWER ON CHRISTIAN RIGHT, CAN JUSTIFY LAST NINE MONTHS OF STRUGGLE

TO ITS FOLLOWERS.

9. CABINET SURPRIFFD EVERYBODY BY CONVENING TODAY FOR REGULAR WEEKLY SESSION. IT STILL IN SESSION AT LAST REPOTE9, WITH FRANGIE AND KJKAME IN ATTENDANCE. NO AGENDA ANNOUNIUD, BUT DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION AND PROJECTED FRANGIE-ASAD MEETING PRESUMABLY UPPERMOST

AMONG TOPICS. FRANGIE WILL CONSULT WITH CATHOLIC LEADERS AND ORTHODOX LEADERS JAN 15. IN CONTINUING EFFORT TO GET HIS DUCKS IN ROW ON CHRISTIAN SIDE BEFORE CONFRONTING SYRIANS. HE IS ALSO DUE TO TALK WITH LEADERS OF SMALLER CHRISTIAN GROUPS (CHIEFLY ARMENIANS AND PROTESTANTS) IN NEXT DAY OR TWO. THE LONG-AWAITED MEETING WITH PRES ASAD STILL APPEARS SET FOR SATURDAY JAN 17, OR AT LATEST FOLLOWING DAY. DAMASCUS IS MOST LIKELY VENUE, DESPITE SOME TALK TWO PRESIDENTS MAY CONFER ON BORDER.

10. BEIRUT'S COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY REMAINS AT VIRTUAL STAND-STILL. FIRE STILL BURNING IN PORT (REFTEL). ON JAN 13, PORT DIRECTOR ESTIMATED FIRE'S DAMAGE AT TEN MILLION LEBANESE POUNDS.
LAMBRAKIS

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